



PEACE ACTIVITIES Annual Report

2020

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Soka Gakkai International

The Soka Gakkai is a global community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. Its members uphold the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism in 192 countries and territories around the world.

Individual Soka Gakkai members strive to actualize their inherent potential while contributing as empowered global citizens to their local communities and responding to the shared issues facing humankind.

The Soka Gakkai and the SGI (Soka Gakkai International) engage in activities to promote the culture of peace. The SGI has been accredited as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1983.

Action on Global Issues

Working with the UN, NGOs and other stakeholders, the SGI undertakes efforts to address global issues through activities such as raising awareness and bringing ideas and recommendations to the UN. The SGI Office for UN Affairs based in New York and Geneva is actively engaged at the United Nations.

The SGI was an early proponent of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–14) and played an active role in the UN process for the realization of the World Programme for Human Rights Education which was launched in 2005 as a follow-up to the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004). It launched the “Second People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition” in 2018 following the first Decade launched in 2007, in order to support efforts to realize the early entry into force and universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The SGI actively participates in networks including NGO committees on specific themes such as peace and disarmament, human rights education and gender equality in New York and Geneva, as well as the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO).

Peace, Culture and Education

The ideal of peace describes a world in which all people can freely thrive and express their potential, a world in which the dignity of life and the fundamental rights of all people are respected. Promoting culture means enhancing and celebrating our shared humanity and interconnectedness. Education, in its broad sense, is the ongoing cultivation of our humanity.

Peace Proposals

The annual peace proposals of Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), have played an important role in inspiring action toward these ideals both at local and global levels.

I. Peace and Disarmament

The SGI’s nuclear abolition efforts trace their roots back to 1957, when second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda (1900–58) made a public declaration calling for the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons. The SGI has been working toward realizing a world free from nuclear weapons and the creation of a culture of peace through a number of initiatives and events, including the latest exhibition “Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons.”

II. Sustainable Development and Climate Action

The SGI promotes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sustainable living through community-based non-formal education efforts. It has developed various educational tools including the “Seeds of Hope & Action” exhibition, a joint initiative between the SGI and the Earth Charter International (ECI) launched in support of UNESCO’s ESD for 2030 Initiative. Climate justice resonates with Buddhist philosophy and the principle of standing with the most vulnerable in society. In response to the current global emergency, the SGI has begun working on awareness-raising, mitigation and advocacy at the global, national and local levels.

III. Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Risk Reduction

The SGI has been engaged in humanitarian relief activities over the years, taking advantage of its unique strengths and capabilities as a faith-based organization (FBO). Since the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015, the SGI has organized events sharing the Soka Gakkai’s relief efforts following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011.

IV. Human Rights Education

The quest for human rights can be perceived as “a challenge of otherness” in which individuals develop the courage to acknowledge, respect and appreciate the differences among people. The SGI is engaging in activities to advance human rights education in support of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005–ongoing) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011).

V. Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment

Gender equality and the empowerment of each individual are integral to the Buddhist philosophy of the Soka Gakkai, which upholds the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings. The SGI supports the activities of UN Women and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) by working with other like-minded groups through organizing events and actively participating in the NGO Committee on the Status of Women.

SGI President Releases 2021 Peace Proposal

January 26, 2021

ON January 26, 2021, the annual peace proposal by Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), titled “[Value Creation in a Time of Crisis](#)” was released, marking the anniversary of the founding of the SGI.

Ikeda called for further global cooperation to address the key issues of our time: the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and the need to rid the world of nuclear weapons. These issues are not constrained by national borders and cannot be solved by any one government or organization alone.

He commented, “Our shared efforts to respond to the pandemic can serve as a foundation for generating global awareness of the essential role of human solidarity in transforming crises.”

Regarding the pandemic, he welcomed the COVAX facility that aims to ensure the global procurement and availability of COVID-19 vaccines. He proposed the holding of a

high-level meeting at the UN to address COVID-19 and the convening of an online “beyond COVID-19” youth summit to discuss the kind of world young people want to see in the aftermath of this crisis.

Ikeda also highlighted the economic devastation brought about by the pandemic, estimated to be threatening the livelihoods of 1.6 billion people—half the world’s workforce—and emphasized the need to promote global social protection initiatives. He called on the OECD to play a leading role here and in a transition to a green economy, where resources saved on military expenditure can be allocated to expanding healthcare and social services.

Consistent with his decades of action toward the abolition of nuclear weapons, Ikeda welcomed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force on January 22, 2021, as a “pivotal event ushering in a new era” that will spur a paradigm shift in approaches to security.

He called on Japan to participate in the first meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW, to begin to create the conditions in which future ratification can become possible.

He proposed that a forum for discussing the relationship between nuclear weapons and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be held during the first meeting of States Parties to the TPNW.

Looking toward the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference scheduled for August 2021, Ikeda also urged discussion on the true meaning of security in the light of crises such as the climate emergency and the pandemic.

He also called for the final document of the Review Conference to include a pledge of non-use of nuclear weapons and the freezing of all nuclear weapon development until 2025.

I. Peace and Disarmament

In 2020, marking 75 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) reached the 50 ratifications required for its entry into force. This milestone heralded the start of the end of the nuclear era.

The SGI, as an international partner of ICAN, has been committed to the establishment and entry into force of the TPNW. Despite this difficult time, the SGI has continued to work toward the universalization of the treaty, actively collaborating with other NGOs, civil society actors and faith-based organizations (FBOs) around the world toward the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The SGI is also actively engaged in the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

Peace and Disarmament

01

Cooperation on Joint Statement and Youth Assembly toward NPT Review Conference

In May 2020, the SGI joined more than 80 civil society organizations endorsing a [joint statement](#) addressed to the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It urged government leaders to act with greater urgency and cooperation

to meet the unfulfilled promises to reduce nuclear risks and advance progress on disarmament, and to realize their commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

An [online Youth Assembly](#) took place on

May 2, and was attended by over 370 participants. The event was initially scheduled for April as part of the [World Conference 2020](#), right before the [Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT](#), but it was transformed into an online meeting due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The SGI was on the planning committee for the Youth Assembly, along with other organizations including International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Peace Action New York State, PEAC Institute, Amplify, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and Beyond the Bomb. Aimed to generate interaction among youth, the event made connections between nuclear weapons, the climate crisis and racial and economic justice, with a specific focus

on how to build movements in the era of COVID-19 and beyond.

Young panelists from the various issue areas discussed how to break the silos of different social movements and engage young people in activism. As a follow-up to the Youth Assembly, regional online breakout sessions took place on May 16. Participants discussed the next steps toward planning for a more equitable and safe future. The aim was for each to leave with a concrete plan to work together toward a unified movement in advocating for a world free from nuclear weapons, the climate crisis and racial and economic inequality.



Statements

on the 75th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the SGI, along with 188 groups from around the world, endorsed a [joint interfaith statement](#) coordinated by Faith Communities Concerned About Nuclear Weapons, to speak in one voice and reject the existential threat to humanity posed by nuclear weapons. Released on August 6, the statement reaffirmed that the presence of even one nuclear weapon violates the core principles of our different faith traditions and threatens the unimaginable destruction of everything we hold dear. It states, “We are grateful for the global hibakusha, survivors, who have courageously borne witness, often in the face of intimidation and the recurring tragedy of loss and illness. We must meet the courage of the survivors with our own. We must abolish nuclear weapons forever.”

The interfaith statement urged governments to use the opportunity of the 75th anniversary of the only occasion that nuclear weapons have been used in conflict to ensure that they are never used again in any circumstance. It called upon all States to

join the growing community of States which have rejected nuclear weapons entirely and appealed to them to ratify the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#). This is the 12th such interfaith statement issued since 2014, supported by a growing number of faith groups.

In commemoration of the anniversary, the Soka Gakkai also put out a [statement](#) calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons and the early entry into force of the TPNW. In the statement, Yoshiki Tanigawa, chair of the Soka Gakkai Council on Peace Issues, reasserted that the Soka Gakkai would continue its efforts toward the complete elimination of nuclear weapons from the world. He also stated, “In recent years, there are signs that a nuclear arms race among the nuclear-weapon states is again intensifying. At the same time, the global spread of the novel coronavirus has demonstrated that military force is incapable of resolving global challenges, compelling us to confront the question of what constitutes authentic security for human beings.”

Activities

on the 75th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The Parliament of the World’s Religions’ Next Generation Task Force hosted a webinar titled “[Interfaith Perspectives on Nuclear Weapons: A Multigenerational Conversation](#)” on August 15, where panelists engaged in a conversation on nuclear weapons, the importance of disarmament and the critical role of interfaith and multigenerational action toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

Anna Ikeda of the SGI was one of the four panelists and spoke about the role of faith communities in the abolition of nuclear weapons, based on her personal experience and the work of the SGI. She addressed the challenge that the issue of nuclear weapons is often perceived as far removed from people’s reality and day-to-day life, resulting in a lack of awareness or sense of

FEATURING

Anna Ikeda works for the Office for UN Affairs of Soka Gakkai International, a lay Buddhist organization dedicated to peace, culture and education. She is a campaigner for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, focusing on the Caribbean region.

Audrey Kitagawa is the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, President/Founder of the International Academy for Transcultural Cooperation, the President of the Light of Awareness International Spiritual Family, the former Advisor to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict at the United Nations.

Christopher D. Zeffing serves as Program Officer for Network Development and Coordination at Religions for Peace and holds a Master of Theological Studies degree from Harvard University with a concentration in Religion and the Social Sciences, as well as a Bachelor of the Arts degree from Berry College with a major in Religion and Philosophy and a minor in Anthropology.

The Rt. Rev. William E. Swing is the President and Founding Trustee of URI; Former Episcopal Bishop of California. Rev. Swing is an inspirational speaker and an author that works on interfaith relations, LGBTQ+ issues in the church, and nuclear disarmament.

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disempowerment. She stressed that faith communities are able to play a vital role in bridging this gap by demonstrating how nuclear weapons relate to the core principles of their faith traditions.

Ikeda also spoke about the power of education in transforming the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons, and the need to develop the creative human capacity to change our circumstances.

The webinar was launched in partnership with the Charter for Compassion, Religions for Peace, United Religions Initiative and the Parliament of the World's Religions. It was also hosted in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings and organized

as a supplement to the [Hiroshima/Nagasaki Accord](#), which the SGI has endorsed.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) coordinated [Four Days of Action against Nuclear Weapon Spending](#) in commemoration of the anniversary. As part of this campaign, WILPF produced two videos of campaigners and activists from around the world calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the redirection of budgets toward peace, justice, equity and well-being for all. The second video, [Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings: Never Again](#), was launched on August 9, the anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki, and featured five statements against nuclear weapons including one from Hayley Ramsay-Jones of the SGI.



introduced, including a new chapter on intersectionality and racism by Hayley Ramsay-Jones of the SGI.

In August 2020, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots' Working Group on Intersectionality (WGI) conducted its first official meeting. The group was formed in recognition of the consequences and challenges posed by systemic and structural inequalities that exist within civil society. The primary objective of the group is to improve the diversity and inclusion of the campaign itself and to help the campaign adopt an intersectional approach to its work. It will do so by making recommendations to the Steering Committee on issues pertaining to systemic and structural inequality. Due to her prior work on these issues, Ramsay-Jones was one of three campaign members invited to become the founding members of the WGI, along with Thompson Chengeta of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control and

Wanda Muñoz of Seguridad Humana en Latinoamérica y el Caribe (SEHLAC).

On September 15, Ramsay-Jones featured in the campaign's Instagram Live and spoke about killer robots, racism and intersectionality. This was part of an interview series by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots called "Killer Robots Q&A," which was launched in May. In her remarks, Ramsay-Jones spoke about the interconnectedness of all forms of violence, including social violence in the form of structural, social, political and economic discrimination, and how weapons systems have throughout history been used to uphold power disparities and discrimination. She also pointed out that we all must reflect on where we are upholding and perpetuating violent discrimination (in ourselves, our organizations and campaigns), and do the work necessary to transform it, as this is the only way to help create safer, more just and equitable societies.

Peace and Disarmament

04

Collaborating with the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots held its [second global meeting](#) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in February 2020. The participants engaged actively in discussions on why a ban treaty is necessary, elements

of the desired treaty and how to achieve it through various strategies including regional and national campaigning and outreach to wider audiences. At the meeting, an updated [Campaigner's Toolkit](#) was

Cohosting Humanitarian Disarmament Forum on Race and Intersectionality



From October 19–21, the SGI and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots cohosted part one of the [Humanitarian Disarmament Forum 2020–2021](#), with a record attendance of 115 participants. This is an annual forum held parallel to the UN General Assembly First Committee session. Since 2012, the [forum](#) has brought together campaigners from various humanitarian disarmament

campaigns and has sought to substantively explore the crosscutting challenges and themes between them and to collectively identify solutions including practical measures.

The theme of the 2020–2021 forum is “Race and Intersectionality.” Aside from the opening and closing sessions on the first and

last days of the forum that brought everyone together, participants broke out into three “affinity groups” over the course of the three days for discussion sessions. Each group engaged in deep facilitated conversations about how racism impacts and manifests in the communities we work in and how an intersectional approach can be applied to disarmament.

Dominique Day, chair of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, gave the forum’s keynote during the opening session. The organizing team worked with the Seattle-based Anti-Racism at Work (ARAW), who provided remarks during the opening and closing sessions, as well as serving as facilitators for the affinity groups. For a summary of part one of the

forum, visit the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots [website](#).

Participants provided positive feedback. For some, the forum served as an opportunity to reflect on their own privilege and lack of awareness, while for others it provided a sense of relief that there is a safe space to talk about racism collectively.

In 2021, participants will undertake a guided self-study process of learning and dialogue through community hubs, a book club and a series of webinars. Finally, if feasible, a face-to-face forum will be held in New York in October 2021 to conclude the two-year process of the learning journey.



SGI Marks 50th Ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

On October 24, 2020, on the occasion of the ratification of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) by the 50th State Party, Honduras, the SGI issued a welcoming [statement](#). In it, Hirotsugu Terasaki, director general of the SGI Office of Peace and Global Issues,

welcomed the 50th ratification of the treaty and underscored its historical significance in establishing a norm that prohibits all activities related to nuclear weapons. The statement reads: “It is up to civil society to decide if we will continue to tolerate humanity being hostage to nuclear weapons, or whether we



The “Everything You Treasure” exhibition on display at the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

will raise our voices as an irresistible force for their banning and abolition.” He also shared the SGI’s commitment to expanding solidarity among people committed to realizing a nuclear-weapon-free world.

On September 30, the [ceremony for Malaysia’s ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the SGI/ ICAN exhibition “Everything You Treasure— For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons” as

a backdrop. In his statement, read by Deputy Foreign Minister Dato’ Kamarudin Jaffar, Foreign Minister Dato’ Seri Hishammuddin Hussein described the SGI and Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) as two of several “invaluable partners” who had supported the government’s efforts toward ratification. The exhibition was on display at the Ministry from September 28 to October 2, cohosted by SGM and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (See [SGM press release](#).)

SGI Panelist at Launch of Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security UK Chapter

On June 24, Hayley Ramsay-Jones of the SGI joined the virtual launch of WCAPS-UK, the UK branch of [Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security](#), as a panelist. WCAPS was created three years ago in the USA, aiming to advance the leadership and professional development of women of color in the fields of international policy-making, disarmament, peace, security and conflict

transformation. The event started with introductory remarks by Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, founder and executive director of WCAPS, and Anuradha Damale, director of WCAPS-UK.

Ramsay-Jones spoke about racism and intersectionality in weapons systems— especially nuclear weapons and killer

SGI Representative Speaks at ACA/WILPF Webinar on Nuclear Ban Treaty and the NPT

robots—and in international policy-making, drawing from her papers “[A Social Injustice—Race, Gender and Nuclear Weapons](#)” and “Intersectionality and Racism” ([Campaign to Stop Killer Robots Campaigner’s Kit](#), pp. 26–31). She discussed how these weapons came to be, how they have been used (nuclear weapons) and how they could potentially be used (killer robots). Her presentation also explored how different weapons systems uphold racist structures and could further exacerbate discriminatory and damaging impacts.

The panel included three other speakers. Punam Yadav, research fellow in Gender and Disasters in the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London, spoke about the implementation

of the National Action Plan of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 in Nepal. Warsan Cismaan Saalax, chair of the British Somali Association and a clinical psychologist, detailed the mental and psychological consequences of racism on affected individuals and communities. Finally, Linda Goler Blound, president and CEO of the Black Women’s Health Imperative, discussed how higher death and illness rates in certain communities more than others are linked to wider inequalities such as poverty, rather than race biology.

The event was chaired by Mélina Villeneuve, a member of the WCAPS-UK board, and was attended by over 100 participants.

The Arms Control Association (ACA) and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) co-organized a webinar titled “[The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#)” on August 27, as part of their new joint series on “Critical NPT Issues.”

Anna Ikeda of the SGI spoke at the event, together with George-Wilhelm Gallhofer, head of Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation and executive secretary of the Hague Code of Conduct at the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, who addressed the complementarity between the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) from legal and diplomatic perspectives.

In her capacity as an ICAN campaigner, Ikeda discussed the status of the TPNW

with respect to its entry into force, and its implications in the context of the NPT. She emphasized that with the NPT Review Conference postponed until 2021, it was likely that the TPNW would by then have entered into force. Despite criticism that the TPNW is divisive or weakens the nonproliferation regime, Ikeda underscored that it complements and strengthens the NPT as an effective measure as foreseen in Article VI of the NPT which stipulates: “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

The webinar was moderated by ACA Executive Director Daryl Kimball and joined by over 100 participants.



Soka Gakkai Japan Youth Peace Summit Held Online



On September 6, the Soka Gakkai Youth Division organized an online peace summit. The annual peace summit has taken place since 1989 as a forum to discuss concrete steps for peacebuilding. Over 300 participants joined the event, and youth representatives of both SGI-UK and Soka Gakkai Malaysia introduced the peace activities

taking place in their respective countries. Given that the average age of the hibakusha now exceeds 83, the participants shared their determination that they would never forget the wartime experiences of the hibakusha and dedicate themselves to realizing peace.

The Soka Gakkai Youth Division also launched a series of sessions where hibakusha testimonies could be listened to virtually. From the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo), Secretary General Sueichi Kido, Assistant Secretary General Jiro Hamasumi and Michiko Kodama joined the sessions, sharing their experiences of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They called on

the youth to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

In addition, members of the Soka Gakkai Student Division and Youth Division continued to conduct interviews to collect war testimonies from Okinawa as well as from hibakusha in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These were published in the fall of 2020.

Supporting the High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace

On September 10, [the High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace](#) was convened online by the president of the UN General Assembly in cooperation with the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace (GMCoP). The SGI is a founding member of GMCoP and has helped organize the forum for eight consecutive years since 2012.

Under the theme of "The Culture of Peace: Change Our World for the Better in the Age of COVID-19," the event included an opening segment with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. In his remarks, he

emphasized the significance of building the culture of peace as a foundation for international cooperation. Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former under-secretary-general and high representative of the UN and founder of GMCoP, then addressed the gathering, followed by a plenary where 38 Member States made statements.

The afternoon session was organized by GMCoP with speakers from all over the world sharing their experiences and insights on advancing the culture of peace.

Supporting the Hibakusha Appeal

The Hibakusha Appeal, [the International Signature Campaign in Support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#), was launched in 2016, in response to pleadings from the hibakusha in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By the end of December 2020, the total number of signatures collected was 13,702,345, and they were submitted to the United Nations in early January 2021.

The campaign was supported by a wide range of individuals and groups committed to the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons. As a member of the campaign's Liaison Council, the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee in Japan, together with the Soka Gakkai Youth Division and Women's Peace Committee, actively engaged in and widely promoted the campaign, collecting more than 610,000 signatures by the end of 2020.



II. Sustainable Development and Climate Action

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set as an urgent call for action toward 2030 with the goal of “leaving no one behind.”

In 2020, the unprecedented crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the inequalities in global society. It also awakened us to the interdependence of all living beings and their environments.

At the same time, COVID-19 stalled the momentum of climate action. Swift systemic changes and even greater involvement from civil society will be necessary to protect our planet from catastrophe.

In order to respond to these global challenges, the Soka Gakkai has been implementing awareness-raising activities and reforestation in collaboration with UN agencies, NGOs and other faith groups with the shared aim of ensuring our sustainable future.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

Side Event on FBOs and the 2030 Agenda at UN High-Level Political Forum

On July 7, the Asia Pacific Faith-Based Coalition for Sustainable Development (APFC), of which the SGI is a founding member, hosted an online side event titled “Faith-Based Organizations Accelerating Action and Delivery in Advancing the 2030

Agenda: Partnership in Action in Asia-Pacific” during the 2020 [UN High-Level Political Forum](#).

The SGI helped organize the event, where participants shared best practices toward

SGI Supports Global Call for Recognition of the Right to a Healthy Environment and Special Procedures Mandate on Human Rights and Climate Change



The founding of the APFC at the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in Bangkok in March 2018

realization of a decade of action and delivery of the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region through effective partnerships between states, international organizations, civil society organizations and faith-based organizations (FBOs).

Renowned Indian social activist Swami Agnivesh discussed the role of interfaith cooperation, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Representative to the Philippines Shinji Kubo stressed the importance of collaborating with faith communities in humanitarian work, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Katherine Marshall, senior fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, emphasized the critical role FBOs should play in intervening in global challenges, such as gender-based violence and access to education, and creating societies where no one is left behind.

Approximately 100 participants including representatives from UN agencies and civil society joined the event.

On September 11, more than 950 civil society organizations, social movements, local communities and indigenous peoples worldwide issued a [Global Call](#) for the UN Human Rights Council to recognize without delay the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The SGI helped draft the call as part of the campaign and endorsed it from the start. This Global Call

was acknowledged during the 45th Session of the Human Rights Council.

During the same session, the SGI, together with other members of the Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights, issued a [written](#) and [oral](#) statement calling for the establishment of a special procedures mandate on human rights



Alexandra Masako Goossens-Ishii of the SGI reads the statement on behalf of the Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights



Shara Duncan Villalobos, deputy representative of the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the UN in Geneva, speaks in support of the right to a healthy environment

and climate change. The statement pointed to the current lack of means to address climate change in a comprehensive way, including clarifying States' legal obligations or providing effective support to States and affected communities. It also emphasized that there is an increased urgency for the Council to address the issue because the current climate crisis has been further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, on September 8, the SGI cosponsored a virtual briefing organized by the Center of International Environmental

Law, Franciscans International and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung titled "Enhancing the Response of the UN Human Rights Council to Climate Change: Toward the Appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change." The event brought together representatives of Bangladesh, the Marshall Islands and Fiji, as well as key voices from the Climate Vulnerable Forum, together with Olivier de Schutter, UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

03

SGI Supports Online Interfaith Climate Action Events

In October and November, the SGI co-organized a three-part interactive online series "Faiths Unite: Visions for Transformative Climate Action," together with several faith-based organizations active in the Interfaith Liaison Committee (ILC) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The events gathered hundreds of participants, including faith leaders, scientists and policymakers.

At the first event, "[The World We Want](#)," panelists reflected on what the pandemic

has changed and shared visions of the world they want. Reverend James Bhagwan of the Pacific Conference of Churches (Fiji) challenged the dominant narrative on the climate crisis by saying: "Where we speak of death and destruction, we choose to speak of life, especially when we come from an area that is deeply affected by climate change."

The second online event, "[COP26—Ramp up Ambition!](#)" asked the different panelists five questions related to COP26, including what is important to have on the agenda

and what kind of climate actions are needed now. UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary Ovais Sarmad called for a successful outcome based on leadership and trust between parties and different stakeholders, as well as moral and ethical responsibility at all levels. Addressing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Sarmad stressed the need for continued and urgent focus on decarbonization over the next 10 years.

The last event, "[Hope for the Future](#)," gathered speakers from different faith backgrounds and generations around the question of hope into action for the future. Tais Tokusato from the [Soka Institute of the Amazon](#) in Brazil shared the activities of the institute and reflected on how her Buddhist

practice enables her to transform her hope into concrete actions for climate justice. She said, "I believe faith-based communities convert hope and so many other important principles for climate justice into concrete actions that impact common people's daily lives. It is exactly by uniting common people with shared values such as respect, empathy and solidarity that a worthy and just future will be built."



Speakers in the "Hope for the Future" event, including Tais Tokusato of the Soka Institute of the Amazon (top, center)

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

04

Soka Institute Plants One Amazonian Tree for Each Brazilian COVID-19 Victim

On September 21, the National Day of the Tree in Brazil, the Soka Institute of the Amazon near Manaus, responding to the tragic toll of the pandemic, launched an

initiative to plant one tree in honor of each Brazilian victim of COVID-19 over a four-year period.



This “Life Memorial” project is supported by Fundação Rede Amazônica, the charitable arm of the main TV station in Amazonas State. Native species such as cedar, rosewood, peroba and ipe amarelo have been planted. The seedlings were cultivated in the Soka Institute nursery and are georeferenced.

President of the Soka Institute Edison Akira Sato commented, “This project aims to honor victims of COVID-19 and comfort their families, perpetuating their memory by planting trees, and creating benefits for the

community and the environment.” Judge Adalberto Carim Antonio, principal judge of the State Environment Court, stated his pride that the people of Amazonas State can contribute to protecting the environment in this way.

Where possible, each tree will be named after a victim, and for those from Amazonas State, their families may be involved in the planting. The Soka Institute hopes to involve the inhabitants of Manaus in caring for the trees. Interfaith collaboration is also being promoted in the project.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

05

Action to Promote the SDGs and Tackle Climate Change

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, during 2020, several Soka Gakkai local organizations carried out awareness-raising activities on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate change.

In light of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) to be held in Glasgow in November 2021, SGI-UK launched a monthly webinar series highlighting the climate crisis from the Buddhist point

of view and showcasing climate action at the local level.

In October, Soka Gakkai Italy participated in a Sustainable Development Festival held by the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS). A film produced by Soka Gakkai Italy titled *Cambio Io, Cambia il Mondo* (If I Change, the World Will Change) consisting of three stories highlighting action taken by individual members, was presented at the festival.

The Youth Division of Soka Gakkai Japan also launched a webinar series on the climate emergency, and the Student Division organized a contest where participants

presented their own ideas for achieving the SDGs.

In 2021, the Soka Gakkai organizations in Italy, Japan and the UK plan to collaborate toward COP26.

In September 2020, Soka Gakkai Malaysia held an online webinar on the environment and climate change inviting three speakers, which attracted an audience of 2,800. They discussed how to tackle the climate crisis from the perspectives of development, education and youth. The importance of individual action at the community level was stressed, as was awareness-raising that promotes such action.

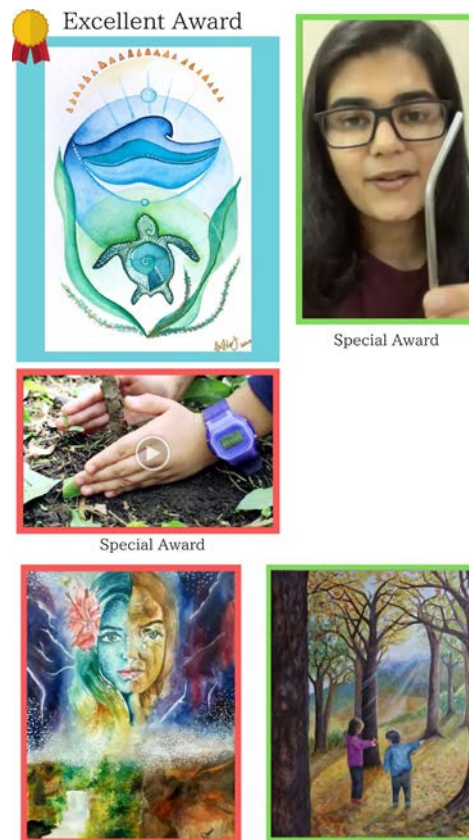
“Shift to Green” Photo and Video Contest

The SGI organized a “Shift to Green” Photo and Video Contest in July to highlight action to tackle climate change in partnership with the Earth Charter International (ECI), Greenpeace Japan, the Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability and the Soka Institute of the Amazon in Brazil.

Applicants were encouraged to share on social media photos and videos showing their visions toward a carbon-free society or their appreciation for nature and people engaging in protecting the environment. Maptiong, a free app produced by ECI and the SGI, was the main tool used for this project.

More than 150 applications from across the world were submitted, and [10 entries](#) were selected as prize winners. An online event was held on September 19, where the winning photos and videos were showcased, with messages from the event sponsors and a video introducing the work of the Soka Institute of the Amazon. The keynote speech was given by Mirian Vilela, executive director of the Earth Charter International Secretariat.

Trees were planted in the names of the contest winners at the Soka Institute of the Amazon.



Winning entries in the “Shift to Green” contest

Soka Gakkai Supports ITTO Reforestation Project in Togo

The Soka Gakkai and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) [signed an agreement](#) to support forest landscape restoration in Togo on July 1.

Currently, Togo’s forests are being lost due to farmland expansion, extreme weather events and the overuse of forests for household energy and housing. The aim of the pilot project is to train women in nursery establishment and maintenance, enrichment planting, agroforestry, food cropping and the production of forest products.

Expected results from the pilot, which will take place in the villages of Pagala-gare

and Agouegan in Blitta and Lacs prefectures, include restored forests, higher family incomes and greater resilience in the face of climate change.

The project will be implemented by the African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests—an NGO and a member of ITTO’s Civil Society Advisory Group.

At the signing ceremony, ITTO Executive Director Gerhard Dieterle thanked the Soka Gakkai for its support, saying, “This is exactly the kind of innovative, grassroots initiative that can make a huge difference to the lives of rural women as well as protect local forests.”



ITTO Executive Director Gerhard Dieterle (left) and Soka Gakkai President Minoru Harada at the signing ceremony

Soka Gakkai Japan Promotes Net-Zero Carbon Emissions



In May, the Soka Gakkai joined a network called RE Action—Declaring 100% Renewable (RE Action). RE100 is a network of global companies with the same objective, whilst RE Action comprises local governments, small and medium-sized enterprises and nonprofit organizations in Japan that

have committed to 100% of their electricity coming from renewable sources by 2050.

The Soka Gakkai is the first religious organization to join this network and plans to review its contracts with utility companies and increase the use of solar panels at its centers.



III. Humanitarian Relief & Disaster Risk Reduction

In 2020, many natural disasters occurred around the world, while the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 also brought unprecedented challenges. Using their human networks and experience, Soka Gakkai organizations and members responded promptly and provided support to affected peoples and communities. In addition, the SGI is sharing lessons learned from the viewpoint of a faith-based organization (FBO).

During the COVID-19 pandemic—where human mobility is a threat—refugees live in increasingly severe environments with scarce support. The Soka Gakkai has been engaged in support for refugees and related awareness-raising since the 1980s, and plans to launch a new project in 2021.

Humanitarian Relief & Disaster Risk Reduction

01

Relief Activities after Disasters in Japan and Panama

In July 2020, heavy rains hit the south-western island of Kyushu in Japan and caused torrential floods and landslides, which led to the forced evacuation of many people in some areas. The Soka Gakkai promoted volunteer activities to clean mud out of people's houses and delivered relief supplies to those in need. The Soka Gakkai also made a donation to Kumamoto Prefecture, one of the worst affected areas.

In November 2020, after Hurricane Eta hit parts of Central America, SGI Panama donated relief supplies such as water, food

and clothing to the Red Cross Society of Panama to support affected local communities. The organization also collected relief supplies at the SGI Panama Culture Center.



Relief activities by SGI in Panama

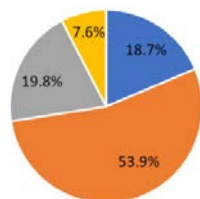
Responding to COVID-19 Worldwide: Relief Activities and Online Survey

In the first half of 2020, as cases of COVID-19 increased around the world, the Soka Gakkai offered support worldwide. In March, Soka Gakkai Italy donated 500,000 Euros (US\$551,000) to the Civil Protection Department of the Italian government and announced its decision to donate to COVID-19 response measures the entire amount of the “eight per thousand tax” income that it would receive as a religious organization officially recognized by the Italian government.

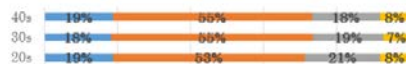
Soka Gakkai organizations in many other countries, including Argentina and the UK, also provided relief supplies to those in need.

In May, the Singapore Soka Association held a blood donation drive in partnership with the Singapore Red Cross in response to the national blood supply falling to a critical level. Youth Division members also participated in the distribution of hand sanitizer donated by the government.

Q 2-1. Did you experience stress from imposed restrictions?



2-1. Did you experience stress from imposed restrictions? [Answers based on age group]



SGI-USA donated medical masks to medical institutions throughout the country and in Caribbean countries, and Brazil Soka Gakkai gave face shields to hospitals in several large cities. In Brazil, in September, the Soka Institute of the Amazon also launched the Life Memorial project to plant one Amazonian tree for each victim of COVID-19.

In June, the Soka Gakkai Youth Division in Japan conducted an online awareness survey among youth to learn about the changes in their lives, values and psychological states. They received responses from over 20,000 youth.

According to the results, 34% of respondents had experienced a decrease in income, and over 70% responded that they felt stress as a result of restrictions. In terms of what they came to value through the restrictions in their lives, “meeting with people directly” had the highest response at over 62%.

This survey was part of the Save Life Project launched by the Youth Division to encourage young people to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and the negative impact of the pandemic. The Save Life project also used social media to disseminate information gathered from regular consultations with medical experts.

Responses to Needs of Refugees

In the midst of the global pandemic, refugees and internally displaced persons face increased challenges, including a lack of quality medical care. As a part of its emergency humanitarian assistance effort, the Soka Gakkai made a donation of 5 million yen (US\$ 46,500) to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in April 2020.

In the same month, the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee held an online event with support from Japan for UNHCR screening the film *Sonita* (2015) a documentary about an Afghan refugee who becomes a rapper. Megumi Nakamura of Japan for UNHCR spoke on the situation in

Afghanistan and on UNHCR’s activities in response to COVID-19. Around 400 people participated in the event.

The Soka Gakkai participated in an online meeting on UNHCR’s engagement with faith-based organizations (FBOs) in response to COVID-19 held in April and also joined the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs held in June.



Still from the film *Sonita*

IV. Human Rights Education

From January 2020, the [fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education](#), focusing on youth, began. As a member organization and co-chair of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning (NGO WG on HREL), the SGI worked closely with other NGOs to bring the voices of civil society to the United Nations by submitting two oral statements and one written statement to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), advocating for the continued implementation of human rights education for youth despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the SGI strengthened cooperation with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, by holding the exhibition “Transforming Lives: the Power of Human Rights Education” at the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva in January, and by joining the UNHCR-led Task Team on Human Rights Engagement as co-chair. The open resource website [Transforming Lives: the Power of Human Rights Education](#) was also translated into three additional languages besides English—French, Spanish and Arabic—and was featured in the UN campaign to commemorate December 10, Human Rights Day.

Human Rights Education

01

Human Rights Education Exhibition Shown at UNHCR HQ

On January 24, 2020, the exhibition “[Transforming Lives: the Power of Human Rights Education](#),” co-created by the SGI, opened at UNHCR headquarters in Geneva. It was displayed there until February 7.

The opening event featured remarks from Gillian Triggs, UNHCR assistant high commissioner for protection; Sabina Stadler, permanent representative of Slovenia to the UN Office at Geneva; Todd Howland,



OHCHR Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch chief; Aya Abdullah, UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council member; and Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI, co-chair of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning (NGO WG on HREL).

Ambassador Stadler commented that tackling global challenges requires “that our decisions at all levels are grounded in the common understanding on being one human family and that all of us are equally deserving of dignity, respect and justice. The task of human rights education is just that: generating and nurturing this understanding.”

Gazzotti shared her hope that visitors would be inspired by the real stories of people’s empowerment that the exhibition features, of making changes for the better in their lives and communities, stating, “We hope that, recognizing the key role we can all play, we can act as engaged individuals to improve and protect the lives of people in our immediate surroundings.”

The event and exhibition showing were organized by the UNHCR, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the NGO WG on HREL and the Permanent Missions of Slovenia and Italy to the UN.

Impact of COVID-19 on Human Rights Education Discussed During HRC44

During 2020, discussions on human rights education highlighted the interlinkage between COVID-19 and human rights, and the key role that human rights education can play in tackling the pandemic. On July 3, during the 44th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC44) in Geneva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education Koumbou Boly Barry presented her thematic report titled “[Right to Education: Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on the Right to Education—Concerns, Challenges and Opportunities.](#)”

On behalf of 18 organizations of the NGO WG on HREL, the SGI submitted a [written statement](#) on human rights education and COVID-19 highlighting the following points:

- The rise of manifestations of racism, xenophobia and discrimination such as hate speech and hate crime highlights the urgent need to accelerate the process of integrating human rights education for all young people, including those with disabilities, into all public and private educational systems and curricula.

- The participation and voices of all youth are essential, particularly those who are most marginalized.
- Access to funds and resources for organizations working on human rights education with youth should be guaranteed.
- States must ensure that all people have access to accurate, reliable and timely information about COVID-19 and to education about their human rights, including health, in a variety of accessible languages and formats.



UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education
Koumbou Boly Barry



Seminar on Human Rights Engagement at Global Protection Forum

During September, the online [Global Protection Forum](#) brought together 3,000 experts to discuss real-time protection challenges and provide strategic direction for protection actors and the Global Protection Cluster (GPC). GPC is a network of NGOs, international organizations and UN agencies engaged in protection work in humanitarian crises including armed conflict, climate change and natural disasters, led by UNHCR.

A new task team on human rights engagement under the GPC was established in May. Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI joined this team

and was appointed as co-chair of the GPC Human Rights Engagement Task Team in June.

As part of the Global Protection Forum, the Human Rights Engagement Task Team organized a session titled “[Human Rights Engagement and How We Can Practically Use It in the Cluster Context](#)” on September 16. The event explored how human rights engagement is relevant to work in a displacement context, seeing it as part of a broader advocacy and protection strategy.

The session was divided into two segments:

a high-level panel discussion with special procedures mandate holders, and a technical level exchange on ways forward in terms of human rights engagement with field protection clusters.

Gazzotti co-moderated the first session together with GPC Coordinator William Chemaly and fellow task team co-chairs Valerie Svobodova of the UNHCR Human Rights Liaison Unit and Isaiah Toroitich of Lutheran World Federation. Speakers included Cecilia Jimenez Damary, special rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, and Siobhán Mullally,

special rapporteur on trafficking in persons. The task team then shared the initial findings of a survey of field protection clusters on human rights engagement conducted in August 2020.

This seminar was the first activity of the Human Rights Engagement Task Team, and it represented an opportunity to bring together different stakeholders from the humanitarian and human rights fields. Around 160 participants from civil society, national human rights institutions and UN agencies participated.

Human Rights Education

04

Statement on Human Rights Education and COVID-19 at HRC45



The 45th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC45) was held online from September 14 to October 6. On September 24, on behalf of 21 organizations of the NGO WG on HREL, Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI delivered an oral statement titled "[The Implementation of the Plan of Action and COVID-19](#)." The statement reminded States to submit their national evaluation reports

on the implementation of the third phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and called on them to take concrete action to promote the fourth phase of the World Programme, despite the challenges imposed by COVID-19.

Human Rights Education

05

Human Rights Day 2020: Recover Better –Stand Up for Human Rights

Human Rights Day is observed every year on December 10, the day the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The theme for 2020, "Recover Better—Stand Up for Human Rights," related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to build back better by ensuring that human rights are central to recovery efforts.

To commemorate the occasion, the SGI announced that the Human Rights Education Open Web Resource, [Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education](#), is now available in three additional languages: French, Arabic and Spanish. As a collaborative initiative, the site has been developed by the SGI, HRE 2020, the NGO WG on HREL and the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training, with thanks to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

In November, the website was featured as a [highlight of the UN campaign #StandUp4HumanRights](#) and as a tool which "equips users, especially youth, with



inspiring examples and guidance to realize their human rights and those of others and to contribute to the betterment of their own communities."

On December 9, Elisa Gazzotti of the SGI, as NGO WG on HREL co-chair, was invited by a partner of the Working Group OIDEL to create a [video statement](#) on human rights

education and COVID-19, looking at the main challenges and opportunities linked to the Plan of Action of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. This was part of a series OIDEL launched early in the COVID-19 pandemic,

in which different educational stakeholders share their experiences and thoughts on the impact of COVID-19.

Human Rights Education

06

Publication of Japanese Version of “Our Rights”

The SGI has collaborated with the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Slovenia to create a Japanese version of “Our Rights,” a set of materials for human rights education that includes teaching cards for children and an information booklet for teachers. The materials are key tools in a [human rights education project](#) launched by the Republic of Slovenia in 2005.

To date, “Our Rights” has been translated into 23 languages, and the project has enabled education on human rights for more than 250,000 children in 26 countries in Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.

The SGI’s cooperation was requested early in 2020, and the Japanese translation was prepared under the supervision of Prof.

Hiroshi Fukuda, professor emeritus of Tsukuba University.

The Japanese language version is now available [online](#) and will be produced in printed form during 2021.



V. Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment

2020 marked many milestones in gender equality such as the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the 10th anniversary of UN Women’s establishment. In its ongoing work at the UN in gender equality and women’s empowerment, the SGI, as vice chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York, took part in various virtual events in response to the changing realities that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about, increasing the urgency of these issues.

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

01

Workshop on Engagement of Faith-Based Organizations in Beijing+25

On January 28, 2020, marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25), a full-day workshop took place at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York. The SGI, together with the World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, Islamic Relief USA, The United Methodist Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church, United Religions Initiative, UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund put together a preparatory workshop to explore the specific challenges and opportunities for faith-based organizations to engage

in the Beijing+25 review linking to the anniversary. The day consisted of panels, presentations, discussions and small group work through the world café methodology.

The purpose of the workshop was to develop a collective strategy to present faith voices within Beijing+25 and to ensure that faith organizations through their commitments are included in the Beijing+25 review process and thematic clusters. Over 75 participants gathered to learn more about current challenges and



The January 28 workshop on FBOs and the Beijing+25 review process

the Generation Equality campaign by UN Women, and to take part in discussions on the ways that faith-based organizations can effectively contribute to advancing gender equality, as well as opportunities for further collaboration.

Ivy Koek of the SGI moderated the panel on Women, Peace and Security, which included Simona Cruciani, political affairs officer for the UN Office on Genocide

Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect; Audrey Kitagawa, chair of the Parliament of the World's Religions; and Dinah Lakehal, program officer for the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. The workshop ended with an Interfaith Service on Gender Justice cosponsored by the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations at the Tillman Chapel held in the spirit of World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

02

64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64)

During the CSW64 Chair Briefing in New York on March 2 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made by the

Commission to scale down its two-week session, which marked the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration

and Platform for Action. The session convened on March 9 for a procedural meeting where a [Political Declaration](#) was adopted.

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY) then organized a virtual NGO CSW64 Forum Consultation Day on March 16, and a virtual Conversation Circle Space workshop on March 23, which drew over 1,700 registrants in total. As vice chair of the NGO CSW/NY and co-chair of the Conversation Circles Space, Ivy Koek of the SGI moderated both events. The resilience of feminist and

women's activists was demonstrated, and the online meetings engaged many participants through the chat and small group breakouts.



Ivy Koek of the SGI (left) with NGO CSW/NY colleagues at UN Headquarters

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

03

NGO CSW/NY Committee Activities

As vice chair of the NGO CSW/NY, Ivy Koek of the SGI led a collaborative effort over the summer with the global leadership team of seven sister NGO CSWs (representing all five UN regions and Geneva and Vienna) to help promote the Generation Equality campaign and to better work together globally. This group later joined the NGO CSW/NY Executive Committee as part of the first Global Planning Committee to organize the NGO CSW65 Forum taking place virtually in March 2021. Koek has engaged in the

Beijing+25 activities throughout 2020 as part of the core group of the civil society-led Feminist and Women's Movement Action Plan (fwMAP), and engages in the Beijing+25 Advisory Working Group, made up of over 600 civil society representatives, to stay informed in all Generation Equality campaign updates and give feedback and ideas to the Civil Society Advisory Group.

Over the summer, a working group consisting of six thematic groups created the



Women’s Human Rights Teaching and Advocacy Compendium (consisting of six modules) as a free educational resource to the public. This was part of an initiative by the fwMAP. It focuses on the 12 Critical Areas of Concern outlined in the Beijing

Platform for Action and incorporates other UN human rights mechanisms and the SDGs. Koek joined the “Women and Armed Conflict: Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies” group. This open source resource will be made available in early 2021.

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

04

NGO CSW/NY Marks 20th Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325

On October 22, to mark the 20th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the NGO

CSW/NY held a meeting titled “SCR 1325 Turns 20: Time to Accelerate Action.”

As vice chair of the NGO CSW/NY, Ivy Koek of the SGI co-organized and co-moderated the meeting.

The first part of the program was a panel discussion with Anton Wislocki, first secretary, Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations; Sarah Douglas, UN Women deputy chief of peace and security; Mavic Cabrera Balleza, executive director of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders; and Elizabeth Zimba Kisiigha, ACT Alliance representative for the Africa region.

First Secretary Wislocki mentioned the key connections between women, peace and security and disarmament emphasized in the UN Secretary-General’s report on SCR 1325. Douglas shared highlights of the

report which states, “the policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women warned that the limited progress that has been made on gender equality is at risk of reversal” and outlined the Secretary-General’s five action items for the next decade which referenced the launch of the [Generation Equality Compact](#) on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

The second half of the program included breakout groups organized on various topics that intersect with the women, peace and security agenda, including youth, peace, security, climate and violence against women. Koek facilitated the breakout group on youth, peace and security and intergenerational leadership.





Young Women's Stories— Fostering Leadership Project

In November, the SGI finalized the analysis report of its [Young Women's Stories—Fostering Leadership](#) project through which stories of young women leaders have been gathered and carried on the SGI Office for UN Affairs website. The report was compiled by an outside consultant and aimed to build a deeper understanding of what constitutes leadership: what drives, motivates and challenges individuals' journeys, the ways in which accomplishments and moments

of breakthrough fit into their narratives, and the role self-confidence might play in this process.

The findings found that all 15 project participants exhibited leadership skills through their stories—many of which constitute "[21st century leadership](#)": empathy and compassion, the empowerment of others, a sense of service and mission, self-awareness and reflection.

Youth Forum in Tokyo on Unconscious Bias and Gender Equality

On December 5, the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee and Amnesty International Japan co-organized a virtual youth forum with the support of the United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo (UNIC Tokyo), in commemoration of Human Rights Day (December 10). This third annual forum was on the theme "Overcoming Our Unconscious Biases: What Can I Do to Realize Gender Equality?" Over 200 participants joined the event, which took place in Japanese.



During the panel discussion, Hideki Nakagawa, executive director of Amnesty International Japan, stressed the importance of creating a civil society platform for human rights education in Japan and expressed his hope that Amnesty International Japan would continue its initiative to provide space for youth to learn about human rights while strengthening partnership with other NGOs. Kae Ishikawa, director of the UN Women Japan Liaison Office, spoke about the UN Women initiative [Unstereotype Alliance](#), which aims to eradicate harmful gender-based stereotypes in media and advertising content. She called on the participants to reflect on their unconscious biases which can be easily overlooked unless examined carefully.

Soshi Matsuoka, founder of Fair, an organization advocating for the rights of sexual minorities, shared some examples of "micro-aggressions," daily interactions or behaviors that convey bias toward historically marginalized groups including sexual minorities. He also noted the importance of an intersectional approach to overcome discrimination toward LGBTQ people.

In her closing remarks, Kaoru Nemoto, director of UNIC Tokyo, who moderated the discussion, noted that while unconscious biases are a deeply rooted problem, this is an issue on which anyone can make a change in their local community. She shared her view that institutional reform and awareness-raising activities are both crucial pillars to realizing gender equality.